

Cigarettes still a red-hot seller

Cornering the market

By ROSIE SQUIRES

A LITRE of milk, phone cards and chocolate — these are the items we can't live without, the products that keep the tills ringing in convenience stores.

The biggest sellers are cigarettes, but if you're not a smoker you're most likely to pop into a convenience store to slake a thirst or get a chocolate hit.

An audit of 120 City Convenience stores in NSW has revealed the most popular items purchased by customers are soft drinks, chocolate bars, milk and mobile phone recharge cards.

City Convenience Group operations manager Rami Jbara said cold drinks such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi Max and V Energy drink were bought more often than water.

"Water is popular but I think we are learning to reuse our own bottles and fill up from the tap," Mr Jbara said.

"Power drinks such as Gatorade are more popular and I have noticed people are moving away from soft drinks and towards flavoured and vitamin water."

CONVENIENT PRODUCTS

Telephone recharge cards

Soft drinks

Confectionery (chocolate)

Sports and energy drinks

Fresh milk

Newspapers and magazines

Hot food

Flavoured milk

Water

Ice cream

*Excluding tobacco.
Source: Australian Association of Convenience Stores

Mr Jbara said despite offering more than 300 products including chemist goods, hair accessories, newspapers and magazines, customers rarely came in for a big shop.

"It's a convenience store. People just run in to buy one or two items, which is usually a

drink, a packet of cigarettes or milk," Mr Jbara said.

Despite anti-smoking campaigns, cigarettes are still the most popular item sold in convenience stores.

"Tobacco has been the strongest seller in our stores for the last seven years," Mr Jbara said.

"We must always make sure we have enough cigarettes on the shelves; they bring a lot of customers who might get a drink as well while they are here."

Sheryle Moon, executive director of the Australasian Association of Convenience Stores, said consumer demands are changing at convenience stores throughout Australia.

"There is a demand for more fresh products and shoppers are looking to buy more small basket purchases and enjoy a wider range," Ms Moon said.

Erin Docherty, 18, of Coogee said she never buys more than three items from a convenience store.

"I would get a drink and maybe a chocolate bar but that's it," Ms Docherty said.

